



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Reimagining police engagement?

Citation for published version:

Dwyer, M 2019, 'Reimagining police engagement? Kenya National Police Service on social media', *Policing and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1589470>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/10439463.2019.1589470](https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1589470)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Policing and Society

Publisher Rights Statement:

"This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Policing and Society on 27/03/2019, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1589470>."

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Reimagining Police Engagement?: Kenya National Police Service on Social Media

Dr Maggie Dwyer
University of Edinburgh, School of Social and Political Science
15a George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD
+44 (0)131 651 5076
M.Dwyer@ed.ac.uk

Official police use of social media for public engagement is a relatively new phenomenon on the African continent and the Kenya National Police Service (NPS) is at the forefront of this trend. Drawing on a combination of interviews, focus groups, policy documents, and social media data, this article explores the NPS's motivations and goals in using social media. It also highlights many of the challenges they have faced in implementing their strategy. The research finds that while the use of social media in policing aims to decentralize police communication efforts, in Kenya it has recentralized them. Furthermore, instead of reforming the way the police and public interact, it often serves to reinforce existing practices. While social media does not yet seem to be revolutionizing the way the police engage with the public in Kenya, there are indications that the public is receptive to police social media accounts. In an environment where there is little trust in the police, this openness to engagement is considered an encouraging achievement within the NPS.

‘We see social media as a kind of Godsend and we must exploit it well’ explained a senior Kenyan police officer in the Communications Directorate.¹ This statement exemplifies the enthusiasm about social media within the Communications Directorate of the Kenyan National Police Service (NPS). The sentiment is also reflected in the NPS Communication Strategy, which was released at a ceremony on 21 January 2016. The strategy comes in the form of a glossy booklet full of colour photos with text coordinated to the NPS official colours. Its slick appearance reflects the ambition of the plan: to develop a cohesive strategy which aims to utilize new information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a means to modernize the way the police engage with citizens. In particular, the plan emphasizes the use of social media to enhance accountability and trust in the police.

This is the first NPS Communication Strategy to encourage the use of social media in policing in Kenya. With over two-dozen mentions throughout the fifty page document, social media is not an aside but rather central to the plan for police engagement. Indeed, the ‘application of ICT in policing’ is also listed as one of eight ‘priority areas’ in the broader NPS Strategic Plan for 2013-2017.² While aspects of the strategy are still aspirational, the NPS has been active in the initial stages of

implementing the approach. A team of police officers have been assigned to run the force's social media accounts and have actively devised ways to collect and disseminate information from/to social media. A key aspect to this strategy is for the NPS to become more interactive with the Kenyan population. Yet Afrobarometer survey data and my findings based on focus group discussions and interviews show that many people in Kenya dread interaction with the police, as it often results in bribes, intimidation and, in more extreme cases, excessive force.³ Through social media the NPS suggest a new form of interaction, one in which people can 'go to the police without going to the police.'

This article explores NPS's use of social media to engage with the public and its potential to reshape police-public relations in Kenya. First, it examines why the NPS has decided to use social media in an official capacity. The appeal of social media in policing will be situated in wider literature about communication as a key aspect of police work. While many police forces worldwide acknowledge the importance of communication in policing, the NPS is one of the few forces to use Twitter in a sustained and official manner.⁴ The NPS's entry into the realm of social media will be explained in the context of police reform, the Kenyan government's support of new technologies, and international engagements around ICTs in policing.

Second, the article will examine how the NPS engage with the public on social media, particularly Twitter, and the potential effects thereof. While the NPS have a policy to guide their use, the research shows that much of the day to day activity on social media is at the discretion of the social media team. Interviews with the team will demonstrate how they have interpreted the guidance and ways they have responded to challenges. In doing so it will examine the early effects of the strategy, several of which have been unintended and even contrary to the goals of the communication strategy. The research finds that while the use of social media in policing aims to decentralize police communication efforts, in Kenya it has recentralized them. Furthermore, instead of reforming the way the police and public interact, it often reinforces existing practices. While social media does not yet seem to be revolutionizing the way the police engage with the public in Kenya, there are indications that the public is receptive to the social media accounts of the police.

This study contributes to research on police communication with the public in the context of a rising use of social media. While the majority of existing research has focused on states in the Global North, this study counters the trend by providing a

look at official police use of social media in an African context and highlights both similarities and differences to studies examining developments in the Global North. Kenya is at the forefront of social media use in policing in Africa and large increases in popular use of these platforms across the continent suggest that other countries may soon follow suit.⁵ The research helps question if and how social media could shape police and public engagement on a continent where police are often viewed with trepidation by the public. The study also contributes a new perspective to reforms which promote community-oriented policing in Africa. In the case of Kenya, the adoption of social media as an aspect of policing has developed through the combination of collaborations with international donors and government promotion of ICTs as a form of development. The rhetoric around social media for policing in Kenya fits common ‘normative claims regarding the ostensibly more accountable, responsive, and “democratic” nature of community-based policing’ (Cross 2014, p.535). Yet, the research will demonstrate the difficulties of fulfilling these goals through police engagement on social media, particularly in the context of a highly-centralized police institution.

Methodology and Scope

The material for this article involved field research in Kenya alongside analysis of social media content. This allowed for examination of the social dynamics and decision-making processes that go into the online messages generated by the NPS. The field research included twenty-six interviews; eleven of these were with police officers while the other sources included government officials, journalists, and online activists. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Kenya between January and March of 2016. The police interviewees provided an in-depth understanding of efforts to bring police engagement with the public into the realm of social media. The additional sources all had significant professional knowledge on security issues in Kenya and helped provide important context regarding crime in Kenya, popular perceptions of policing, and other government ICT initiatives. In addition to interviews, focus groups with social media users were held in Nairobi and Mombasa. These are two of Kenya’s largest cities, which also correspond to a larger police presence and a high number of social media users.

My interviews with police focused primarily on the Corporate Communications Department, which is in the Office of the Inspector General.⁶ This

unit is based in Nairobi and is responsible for the NPS's social media strategy. Access to the unit was granted by the National Police Service Spokesperson. I was also introduced to several other police interviewees outside the communications department through journalists, government employees, and civil society contacts in Kenya. The police interviewees included high-ranking officers, such as an Assistant Inspector General (AIG), as well as Inspectors, Sergeants and Corporals lower down the chain of command. All of the police interviewees were men, which reflects the male dominated nature of policing in Kenya. Most of the officers that were interviewed had higher education levels and a more prestigious job than the average police officer in Kenya. Yet, all were experienced officers, most working their way up from the bottom of the command structure. The police interviewees acknowledged a disconnect in their goals as part of the Corporate Communications Department and the daily experiences of the officers working on the streets or stationed in remote locations.

The interviews were semi-structured and involved discussions of the goals of the social media strategy, challenges to its implementation, and ways success in social media engagement could be evaluated. The sources were also asked about how the strategy fits into wider practices of policing in Kenya. Some of the interview questions varied based on the position of the interviewee. For example, the more senior sources provided broader overviews of the origins of the social media strategy, while the individual police officers responsible for producing the messages gave insight into the hurdles of running the social media accounts. In addition to the formal interviews I was also welcomed to the NPS social media team office for an afternoon to see how they work. Discussions with these officers provided unique insight into the day-to-day processes and decisions that occur behind the succinct social media messages that are publicly available.

The NPS Communication Strategy is also an important source of information for this research. The strategy is not available on NPS website but I was provided access to the document via contacts within the police. It is meant to be the guiding document in the use of social media for policing in Kenya. However, guidance in the strategy is often inadequate or at times intentionally ignored. While the NPS strategy does not define social media, it does list Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter as potential social networking sites that could help target engagement. Currently the NPS run public accounts on Twitter and Facebook, with most of their emphasis on

Twitter. The research also involved observing the NPS social media activity through their Twitter feed, including publicly available responses to other users.

In addition to the perspective of those generating security messages online, ten focus groups, with between ten and twelve participants each, were conducted with social media users in Kenya (six focus groups in Nairobi and four in Mombasa).⁷ This approach helps respond to calls for more research on the views of the intended audiences of police social media messages (O'Connor 2017, p. 910). The discussions took place in locations that were considered neutral including community centres, cafes and a university. The participants were selected with the help of local research assistants who intentionally recruited from neighborhoods with different socio-economic backgrounds to allow for a variety of perspectives. All participants used social media on a regular basis (defined as at least several times a week) and were familiar with the NPS account.

The focus group participants were divided by age (18 years of age to 30 grouped together while 30s to mid 50s grouped together) and profession (professional employment and informal employment), with an overall even number of men and women. The focus group discussions involved broad questions followed by open discussion among the group. The group was asked about their own social media use (frequency, types of accounts they follow, types of information they seek) as well as how they interpret and/or verify information on social media. More specific questions followed about information they have seen on social media about crime and security issues and their perceptions of the way the Kenyan police use social media. As social media is a routine part of everyday life for many Kenyans, discussions about the technology generally flowed easily. Overall participants appeared comfortable providing a variety of opinions. Still, as with most group discussions it is possible that some individuals with dissenting views may have not spoken out. Discussions related to the focus group participants' perceptions of the NPS account and differences in opinions related to age and professional background will be detailed throughout the article.

Policing, Communication, and Social Media

The central role of communication in modern policing and the growing emphasis on community engagement has led police forces worldwide to see

opportunity in social media. Policing is most commonly associated with deterring, investigating, and solving crimes and a key tenet to these activities are communication with the public. The role of communication in policing is emphasized in work by Ericson and Haggerty (1997), which argues that policing can be understood as ‘communicating risks.’ Overall, it is rare for police to encounter a crime in progress. Instead police can be viewed as ‘knowledge workers’ (Ericson and Haggerty 1997, p.13) who must receive, channel, and react to communications about risks from the public (Procter, et. al 2013, p.415). However, police communication with the public is not solely focused on risks, it also provides a way to familiarize communities with police and their work by presenting their mission, mandate, and actions to the public. A key police presentation strategy involves ‘image work,’ which portrays favourable images of police work through the media to attempt to maintain control of the public perception of police as credible and legitimate authorities (Manning 1978, Ericson 1982, Mawby 2002, Schneider 2016, Bullock 2018). While earlier studies looked at police image work through print, television, and radio, more recent studies have started to explore these strategies in the digital realm (Lee & McGovern 2014, Meijer & Torenvlied 2014, Schneider 2016, O’Connor 2017, Bullock 2018). As later sections will demonstrate, social media has been envisioned as a medium flexible enough to cover numerous communication goals ranging from warnings of risks, collection of data, and image work.

Communication between police and the public has received increased attention with notions of community policing, which have developed since the 1980s. The concept of community policing ‘is based on the principle of co-ordination and consultation between the police and the policed’ (Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003, p.588). It encourages decentralisation of policing and increased communication between police and citizens (Schneider 2016, p.139). Although largely developed in the US and Europe, community policing strategies have been ‘exported’ to Africa through a combination of NGOs, bilateral exchanges, and international organisations such as the United Nations and European Union (Brogden 2004). As these techniques were transferred to African states it was often envisioned that they would help address human rights issues and ‘democratize’ policing. However, numerous scholars have shown the challenges to the implementation of community policing in various Africa countries and found that the programmes have often exacerbated social tensions (e.g. Brogden 2004, Gordon 2001, Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003). Still, despite some

criticism, the concept of community policing remains popular in Africa. During field research, the term ‘community policing’ was used regularly in conversations with Kenyan police, especially those in high positions. For example one senior officer noted ‘Security is within the community, the IG (Inspector General) has a people centred policing approach and this all revolves around the public.’ He went on to explain that social media provided a new opportunity for more public engagement.

For many police forces, social media is seen as a natural fit for the desire to communicate with the communities that police work in. Social media, and Twitter in particular, provides a public space for two-way communication. Unlike some other social media platforms, connections on Twitter are not based on reciprocity. Users can see content from any public account and all followers can see exchanges between users with public accounts (unless they are sent as a private direct message). It has the additional advantages of a low cost of entry and relatively little effort to maintain (Crump 2011, p.5). Many police departments worldwide have come to view Twitter, with its 336 million active monthly users worldwide, as a potentially powerful way to communicate directly with the public at a mass scale.⁸

Social media, like other forms of communication technologies, are not simply conduits through which information is transferred (Ericson and Haggerty 1997, p.4). Motivations for its use and the way it is used can vary widely. Within police departments the use of social media is often complicated by internal procedures and police culture, which is often not conducive to the way social media typically operates. Examples of these complications within policing in Kenya will be elaborated on in later sections.

Kenya and Police Reform

While social media has become an increasingly common tool of police engagement worldwide, it is still not a widespread practice in Africa. An understanding of why Kenya has decided to take their police engagement into the digital realm needs to be contextualized in the social and political context of policing in Kenya. The NPS communication strategy notes ‘relations between the public and the police have been described as less than cordial.’⁹ This is a significant understatement. Rather than a force that upholds the law, the Kenyan police have long been accused of abusing their power, using excessive force, and engaging in criminal activity (Anderson 2002, Osse 2016, Ruteere & Pommerolle 2003). The poor

performance of the police has been well documented by academics, non-governmental organizations, research institutes, and in recent years by the Kenyan government. Particular attention has been paid to the actions of the police during the post-election violence (PEV) of 2007/2008. The Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (2008, p.331) found that 1,133 people were killed during the violence, which spread in the two months following the elections. Of these deaths, the Commission stated that 405 were likely killed by bullets fired by the police.

While the numbers are staggering, for many the findings that the police were heavily involved in the violence did not come as a surprise. The country has a long history of strained relationships between police and civilians. During the British colonial era Kenyan police served as a force of repression, regularly enforcing unpopular and discriminatory political agendas of the colonial administrators (Anderson 2006, Killingray 1986, Willis 2015). Like many other African countries, the police continued to be seen as a political tool after independence. For instance, human rights reports from the Moi era (1978-2002) reveal that arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings at the hands of the police were common practice (Ruteere 2011, p.13).

It was only in 2003, with the election of President Kibaki, that open discussions about police reforms began to take place. While the Kibaki government established a Task Force of Police Reform and recommendations were made, in practice few significant changes were implemented (Ruteere 2011, p.13). It was not until the aftermath of the post-election violence in 2007/2008 that police reform was renewed with increased vigour. Another task force on police reform was established and implementation of its recommendations began in 2009 (Osse 2016, p.908).¹⁰

The overall goal of these reforms was to increase professionalism, transparency, and accountability within the police. Measures taken to improve accountability and confidence in the police included a new hierarchical structure, the introduction of independent and external oversight, and vetting of all police officers. However, the effectiveness of these measures has been criticized and many of the key reforms (particularly the vetting) have been delayed (Osse 2016, Hope 2015. pp.1-7). Despite years of 'reform speak' (Osse 2016, p.919) lack of political will and competing visions of the objectives of wide scale transformation have hindered change. Attempts to implement the NPS social media strategy have already

encountered some of the same structural hurdles and competing interests, particularly related to issues around decentralizing online communication.

Afrobarometer surveys demonstrate the dire state of contemporary perceptions of the police in Kenya. Of the 34 countries surveyed Kenya ranked the lowest in East Africa for rates of trust in the police and rates of ease of obtaining help from the police (Wambua 2015a, Wambua 2015b). It ranked highest in East Africa for perceptions of corruption within the police (Wambua 2015b).

The long history of negative police-public relations serves as both an incentive to turn to social media and a hurdle for its effectiveness. The NPS are very keen to improve their image and see social media ‘image work’ as a potential option. However, focus group respondents often demonstrated skepticism about NPS social media messages partially due to the longstanding distrust in the police.

International and Internal Influences

The NPS’s strategy to go digital is part of the on-going global connections that shape policing in Africa. From its colonial days to the present, Kenya has been a part of a regular transnational flow of policing ideas, practices, and personnel. These international policing exchanges take place in forms such as international training (often provided to Kenyan police by development partners) and joint international missions (Beek and Gopfert 2015).

When discussing the origins of their strategy for online engagement, several officers mentioned interaction with foreign police as part of the inspiration. For example, an Assistant Inspector General explained

When these reforms were being developed we realized there was a gap with the public. The old way of doing things was not up to date. We wanted to be benchmarked with the best police in the world and we looked outside to see what others were doing that had succeeded. And we borrowed the idea from Europe, specifically from the UK where many officers here have been trained.¹¹

His statement speaks directly to being influenced by Western practices, where ‘social media features more and more prominently in policing and investigations’ (Trottier 2012, p.139). His language also reflects transnational ideas of police reform, in which community-policing measures, as previously described, have been a central theme in Africa (Hills 2008, p.215).

External actors not only played a role in inspiring the NPS to engage with social media, foreign donors also helped directly write the strategy. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) co-authored the Communications Strategy along with the NPS and Kenya's Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology. The UNODC emblem is on the opening pages of the document and the organization received several thanks and acknowledgements throughout. The UNODC has been heavily involved in assisting with the implementation of Kenya's police reforms since 2013.¹² Although the strategy was a joint effort, the UNODC's influence is prevalent with distinctly donor discourse such as 'gender mainstreaming,' and 'human rights mainstreaming.' These goals appear limited to the policy document however, as there was never mention of them by any police interviewees. Furthermore, while there are references throughout the document that make it specific to Kenya, much of the text feels as if it is a template that could be used internationally. Discussions on communication challenges that are particularly germane in Kenya, such as the multitude of languages across the country are noticeably absent from the policy guidance.¹³

It would be a mistake though to view the NPS's decision to move into the digital realm as simply an injection of buzzwords motivated by the 'international police reform industry' (Hills 2008, p.220). The emphasis on ICT within the police is also consistent with wider government strategies and patterns in the private sector in Kenya. Nicknamed the 'Silicon Savannah,' Kenya, and Nairobi more specifically, has become known as a regional technology hub. It is home to technological innovations such as the bankless mobile money transfer service, M-Pesa and Ushaidi, a crowd sourced platform to track violent incidents. The iHub innovation center in Nairobi provides a community and shared space for programmers, investors, and entrepreneurs. Among the first of its kind in Africa, the model has inspired numerous similar spaces in Kenya and throughout the continent.

Kenya's success in the ICT sector can be partially attributed to government strategies that envisioned technological innovation as key to economic growth and broader development (Hersman 2012, p.60). Liberalization of the telecommunication sector, loose regulations that allow for new ideas to be tested, encouragement of public-private partnerships, and investments in ICT infrastructure are some of the key actions taken to assist in the development of the ICT sector.

These actions have not only helped create jobs in the ICT sector, but have also led to wider ICT use in many Kenyans' daily lives. For example, the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector has resulted in much more affordable mobile phone and internet access. Similarly, investments in ICT infrastructure brought faster connections and new access to many parts of the country. While internet penetration was less than 10 per cent in Kenya in 2008 it had risen to 69 per cent in 2015 (Ndemo 2015, p.13, Otieno 2016). This rate is at least double the penetration rate of each of its neighbouring countries (CIPSE 2015). Kenya's high internet use also corresponds to high rate of social media use. Kenya has the third highest number of social media users on the African continent (behind Nigeria and South Africa) (Kazeem 2016; We are Social 2017).

The high level of social media use (particularly in relation to most other African countries) as well as the government's encouragement of ICT helps explain why the NPS have been one of the first African police forces to embrace social media in an official and sustained manner. The high use of social media is also a key factor for why the NPS see such potential in the platform. However, as later sections will expand on, the high number of users in Kenya may make the centralized approach that the NPS have taken to social media unmanageable for community engagement.

NPS Social Media Objectives

In the context of ongoing police reforms, high rates of social media use, and government encouragement for state agencies to have an online presence, the NPS decided that the timing was right for a dedicated social media strategy. On one of the top floors of the police headquarters, overlooking the bustling business district of Nairobi, a senior police officer explained 'we in this room are the pioneers [of the NPS social media strategy].'¹⁴ He was referring to himself and two other officers who are all part of the communications directorate. Their attitudes indeed seemed like that of pioneers. They were highly enthusiastic and excited about their work of bringing social media into law enforcement, which one officer later described as 'uncharted territory' in Kenyan policing. However, they also at times seemed daunted by the course that lies ahead.

These 'pioneers' have been given a map, in the form of the Communication Strategy, to guide them. However, this document is equivalent to a map with major

landmarks but no roads. It places heavy emphasis on the end state, with few details as to how the NPS can use social media to reach the destination. The NPS Communication Strategy describes social media in highly techno-optimistic language (Haunss 2015, p.17). Social media is sold as an ‘innovative way of reaching urban youth,’ ‘a platform for making leaders more accountable,’ and an ‘opportunity for creating visibility and positioning of NPS.’

In stark contrast to this positive language, there is limited guidance on how exactly police should use social media to create accountability and how officers might ‘enhance confidence and trust in the police.’ The most concrete advice in the document comes in the form of what the strategy refers to as ‘branding.’ There are numerous references to the importance of ‘corporate colour’ schemes, logos, and matching fonts and warnings about avoiding any variations in the logos.

With few tangible instructions on how to use social media to build the effects laid out in the strategy, the team of police officers in charge of social media have been given much freedom in how to operate the police online accounts. An Inspector, with the official title of Manager of Digital and Online Communications, is the social media team leader in charge of a small group of several officers dedicated to managing the NPS social media presence. While the NPS as a whole is often considered to be unprofessional and demoralized, this Inspector does not fit this image. With a Masters degree and a background in blogging, he was invited to the position of leading the digital communications team. He is highly enthusiastic about his job, describes policing as his ‘calling,’ and was heavily praised by his seniors.

During several interviews with the NPS social media team leader he explained the practicalities of running the NPS Twitter account. Their office is near the Integrated Command and Control Center (referred to by the officers as the ‘IC3’), which is the office that answers the emergency phone numbers and monitors CCTV. The social media team explained that they coordinate regularly with the IC3 to share and verify information.

When asked about how the team decides what to post on social media, the Inspector in charge of the social media team explained ‘our strategy guides me, we cannot just run wild with this.’¹⁵ He pointed to a text box within the document, titled ‘key objectives of using social media’ and noted that the team attempts to craft their messages to meet the objectives.¹⁶ Indeed a review of the NPS twitter account will find that the vast majority of messages fall into the three key objectives: 1) to create

visibility and promote an understanding of the NPS, 2) to create a platform where members of the public can report matters that affect their security, and 3) provide real-time updates on unfolding events.¹⁷ The sections below will discuss these objectives and related tweets in more detail as well as show how they relate to goals of other police departments worldwide. The role of international organisations in writing the policy likely explains some of the similarities in the NPS goals and those of other forces outside the African continent.

Promoting an Understanding of the NPS

Messages pertaining to creating visibility and promoting an understanding of the NPS make up the majority of the NPS Twitter activity. These types of tweets provide information related to public safety and laws. For instance, the NPS tweet reminders about emergency numbers, tips on driving in bad weather and explanations about vehicle registration. Additionally, these types of social media messages also provide knowledge about how the police operate, with explanations about the organizational structure, dates of recruitment campaigns, news about command appointments, pictures of training sessions, and views into new police housing structures. The NPS social media team also regularly offer easy access to detailed information regarding legislation governing the police and internal police procedures. One such example is a link provided by the NPS Twitter account to the over 800 page document detailing police standing orders. Much of this information is publicly available outside of social media but it would likely be cumbersome to locate. While African police forces are often not transparent about their internal procedures (Bierschenk 2017, p.113), the NPS social media team shows signs of countering this trend with publicly available views into the regulations, leadership structures and training sessions of police. Yet, as detailed below, these are carefully selected views.

In line with social media's emphasis on brevity, the NPS regularly attempt to familiarize the public with police through pictures. Most pictures posted on the NPS twitter account show police in parades, receiving awards, or attending training. These messages demonstrate an attempt to 'stage-manage' (Bullock 2018) the image of the NPS as a professional organisation with regular training and a mandate to serve the public. The photographs present a view of the police as orderly, disciplined, and worthy of awards. While 'police presentation strategies' are used worldwide to create and maintain a public professional appearance of police (Schneider 2016), the need

for such strategies is particularly salient in Kenya given the poor reputation of the police. The images of Kenyan police as presented on the NPS twitter account are in direct opposition to popular notions that the police are unruly, exploitative, and/or involved in extrajudicial justice.

The goal to promote an understanding of the police often extends far beyond police procedures and protocols. The NPS team also present the police force and individual officers as having interests and lives that extend beyond their policing duties. The team tweets well-wishes for various religious holidays, pictures of community events, and occasionally an announcement about a wedding of a police officer or other family milestone. A scroll through the NPS twitter account also shows a large number of messages related to sports. The NPS account will regularly congratulate and post pictures of Kenyan national sports teams or individual athletes such as cross-country runners. In some ways these messages may seem unrelated to the Communication Strategy objectives. However, a heavy emphasis on sports is also seen by other police social media accounts worldwide. This presentational strategy portrays police as down to earth individuals who share similar interests with members of the community. Tweets of this nature attempt to ‘diminish perceptions of authoritarian relations traditionally associated with police’ (Schnieder 2016, p.141). In the Kenyan case showing backing for national teams and athletes likely intends to present the police as an organisation that supports Kenya, countering the idea that they have often had an antagonistic relationship with the general public.

A Platform for Reporting Security Concerns

The tweets that aim to promote an understanding of the NPS, as described above, are mostly one-directional. However, the social media team explained that they have tried to use Twitter as a platform in which users can report crimes. This objective appeared to be the most important for the NPS, as it involved engagement with their online audience. ‘Interactive’ was the key word used dozens of times in both the Communication Strategy and in interviews with the officers running the social media accounts. NPS interviewees explained that they have long had communications strategies that relied on mainstream media. The messages were thus limited to particular broadcast times and did not easily allow for audience responses. The team encourages social media users to directly engage with them either publicly or through direct messages, and many people do.

The NPS social media team publicly responds to numerous messages a week from Twitter users. In addition to the public communication, it is likely that additional messages are sent via the direct message feature, which allows messages to be sent privately and are only available to the recipient (i.e. the NPS account). Most of the publicly visible messages initiated by social media users with the NPS Twitter account involve the user reporting an incident of crime against them or one that they witnessed. During working hours, the NPS social media team is remarkably quick to respond to specific concerns or complaints, often tweeting a response within minutes. Their reply is always very polite and generally directs the user to a particular police station to file an official report. For complaints against specific officers the social media team typically directs the user to the Independent Police Oversight Authority (IPOA), which also has a social media presence.

While the objective of the social media strategy is to create a place where the public can report matters, NPS officials explained that it is not a replacement for submitting a report in person. They suggested that the format and ability to remain anonymous on social media were not conducive to filing official reports. The centralized structure of the social media accounts, as further explained below, and the lack of manpower devoted to the online strategy would also stand in the way of filing reports online. While the NPS encourage users to engage with them online, they require these users to also go to a local police station with their reports. In this way social media is not being used to develop new routes for crime reporting, but rather as a way to encourage behaviours that are more aligned to traditional practices.

Although social media has not provided an alternative space for crime reporting, the NPS social media team believe that having an immediate response to concerns is an achievement. When discussing emergency numbers and providing reports in person, a senior officer noted “people were frustrated with it, often officers showed up much later, only in time to claim a corpse.” He explained that they are trying to counter this trend with quick responses to concerns posted on social media. He continued “we must respond because we want their trust and confidence, we need them to know that we will respond.” The visibility of the NPS dialogues with individual social media users depends to some degree on privacy settings. If the user has a public account, other users can view the exchange, thus the NPS hopes social media can help demonstrate police (online) responsiveness to a broader audience. Still

the team acknowledged that “twitter cannot work alone,” suggesting that their responsiveness online has yet to be matched in police stations offline.

Real-Time Updates

The most challenging of the social media objectives is the goal to provide ‘real-time updates on unfolding events.’ This objective attempts to capitalize on social media’s ability to broadcast news or commentary quickly to large audiences. Yet, the main critique of the NPS social media account during focus group discussions was that it was not fast paced enough. The NPS social media accounts were referred to during the focus group discussions as ‘slow,’ ‘too late,’ ‘sluggish,’ and ‘too careful.’¹⁸ For some this was frustration at unfulfilled expectations that the police would provide them with timely data. Others viewed the slow pace with more suspicion, suggesting that the police were trying to hide information from the public. As noted earlier, the NPS social media team is quick to respond to individualized concerns or complaints, but they often remain silent in the midst of large scale incidents, such as ongoing protests.

Most people in the focus group discussions, particularly those in the youth age range (18 to 30 years old), were positive about the idea of the NPS presence on social media. For example, a respondent exclaimed ‘daily interactions is a part of policing and social media should be a part of it as well.’ Another felt even more adamant, linking the growing crime to the need for more information she noted ‘I want to get 6-7 updates from them a day.’ However, many also expressed frustrations that while the NPS was generating a lot of social media messages, they rarely acknowledge what many felt was a growth of violent crime in parts of the country. A sample of such statements include:

I want more updates about *real* information.

Their posts are useless to me if they only post successes

They say it brings the government closer to the people, but it is just being used for propaganda.

I am always weary of silence, especially when it comes to death.

Police won't give information that doesn't favour their position. They are not open.

The respondents expressed frustration at the heavy emphasis on ‘image work’ within the police tweets. Most seemed to feel let down that the police account were not providing timely information about crime trends which could assist them in avoiding specific areas or situations. For example, one respondent argued that police should be more vocal about a pattern of robberies by men on motorbikes. Another participant retorted that they will not release that information because police themselves are involved. This indicates the way suspicions can develop or intensify around unfulfilled online expectations.

In contrast to the perceived slowness of the of NPS account, numerous focus group respondents commented on the value of Twitter accounts such as ‘Ma3Route.’ This privately owned, crowd-sourced account provides mostly traffic related information but will also post messages on road-related crime (car jackings, robberies at traffic intersections, etc). The account, which is publicly available to anyone using Twitter, is updated every few minutes, providing exact locations and often pictures of busy intersections or accidents. With 1.08 million followers (as of November 2018), the Ma3Route is amongst the most popular Twitter accounts in Kenya and provides an example of what many to seem to expect from the NPS account.

The real-time expectations of social media users often clash with the bureaucratic procedures required for the NPS to release information. The senior level police officers explained that it is neither realistic nor beneficial for them to try to fulfil the ‘real-time’ goal. One officer noted they aim to investigate, verify, and coordinate before sharing information publicly. Another officer exclaimed that determining facts about significant security events as they are happening is challenging and they risk creating an ‘antagonistic’ situation if they report unconfirmed information.¹⁹ Another officer explained ‘We must be factual. Let us be slow but be factual. We have to take our time, not to conceal...we are not trying to hide information, but to be factual.’²⁰ A fourth officer added ‘we must not rush, we have to investigate.’²¹

The NPS’s struggle with social media for real-time engagement is not unique. Studies from police departments with over a decade more experience using social media for policing have also found significant difficulties in effective use of social media during times of crisis. Some of the many challenges include the rapid flow of information, increased pressures to provide updates, and additional demands placed on personnel and resources. Research from police use of social media during the 2011

riots in the UK found that to be effective there is a need for more devolution of decision making about posting information and responding to queries. However, they also note that this could also open police up to operational and reputational risks if individual officers posted inaccurate or uncoordinated information (Procter et al 2013).

So far, during times of heightened tension, the NPS have not devolved decision-making about the release of information but instead are very conservative. In the face of on-going or high-profile security incidents, such as volatile protests in 2016 to change the composition of the electoral commission, the NPS social media team typically only post pictures of official press releases, often days if not weeks after an incident. In this sense, the NPS communicates in a very traditional fashion, despite much excitement and rhetoric about the innovative potential of social media.

Challenges to Decentralizing

One of the goals of NPS's social media engagement is to decentralize police communication with the public. For example, the Communication Strategy explains that in order to 'promote community engagement' all 'officers will be encouraged to have active social media accounts.'²² The document later expands on this idea by stating 'communication will be decentralised so that officers can take responsibility and ownership of the information sharing with staff, stakeholders and the public within their jurisdiction.'²³ This vision is one in which individual officers will be accessible and responsive to the community they work in through social media. The idea is very much aligned with values espoused in community policing efforts.

The goal of decentralizing engagement through social media is similar to other police forces worldwide. However, the inception of social media in policing and who is authorized to tweet is different in Kenya compared to studies conducted in other police forces. For example, police use of social media in Canada and the UK was first introduced by individual officers and then later gained traction at the senior levels. Although many police force hierarchies have issued guidance on how officers should use social media, it has remained a largely decentralized process in most Western European and North American countries with hundreds of police social media accounts in operation (Meijer & Torenvlied 2014). The content of these accounts is

typically localized to the communities they serve in. This bottom-up model is intrinsic to the way social media works (Crumb 2011).

However, in Kenya the process has been a top-down approach and attempts at decentralizing efforts have quickly stalled. Despite initially encouraging police to use social media, senior police interviewees explained that when individual officers adhered it backfired. One officer expressed his concern about cases in which police ‘jeopardized investigations’ by posting pictures from the scenes of a crime.²⁴ Another police interviewee complained about officers posting pictures of internal and confidential NPS documents on their social media accounts.²⁵ Yet another officer argued that social media use is threatening operational security. He explained that individual police officers and soldiers post information about their lives on Facebook and Twitter, in the same way that civilians do. However, information about their whereabouts, both present and future, can leave individuals and units open to targeting by criminals or terrorists. He argued that the pattern of al Shabaab attacking newly deployed Kenyan Defence Force troops in Somalia, is partially enabled by soldiers publicly discussing troop rotations on social media.²⁶ While it would be difficult to verify the accuracy of this claim, there is evidence of al Shabaab actively using social media for strategic means (Mair 2016).

There have also been state security personnel who have turned to social media to explicitly expose issues within the security forces to the public and policy makers. The most popular of these accounts was run under the anonymous pseudonym ‘Modern Corps.’ The account was established in 2013 and quickly gained attention for the detailed ‘insider’ information that was being shared, such as details of payment grievances and pictures inside dilapidated government housing for state security personnel. It was long suspected that the owner of the account must be within the security services and this was confirmed in 2015 when a Samburu County prison warden named Patrick Safari was arrested under the Kenya Information and Communication Act for his postings on the Modern Corps Twitter and Facebook page (Khamadi 2016).²⁷ While owning a Twitter account, even an anonymous one, was not against any regulation in the security services, Safari acknowledges ‘the information I tweet is sensitive.’²⁸ Once he started posting grievances about the inner workings of the KPS he began to receive more tips from other officers around the country, including the NPS and Kenyan Defence Force (ie military), which he circulated on social media.²⁹

The above examples and interviews with police suggest that much of the challenge in decentralizing the communication strategy comes from highly varied uses of social media by individuals. An Assistant Inspector General explained that some senior officers felt that the posting of sensitive and critical information had reached a serious level. In an attempt to address the problem a standing order was issued across the NPS in February 2016. The order stated that any police-related information posted by a serving officer on social media must be approved by the Inspector General. He expanded by saying ‘not even the Officer in Charge of a District (OCD) should be releasing information [on social media], it needs to come from the national level. At times we might have different investigations going on and we don’t want to clash.’³⁰ He clarified ‘we are not saying they can’t open social media accounts. They can have a personal account but not post things which relates to the police.’³¹

This standing order contradicts the Communication Strategy released two months earlier, which highlights decentralized use of social media. One senior interviewee explained ‘we plan to devolve over time’ and another noted that they would like to eventually push the operation of official social media accounts to the county level.³² However, for the time being the leadership said they want the messages to be coordinated at the headquarters. Still, many of the police interviewees were sceptical that the order would lead to a reduction in social media postings citing examples of other widespread indiscipline that also counter orders.

As of the end of 2017 the NPS had not yet decentralized its strategy and as a result there were only a few official Kenyan police-related Twitter accounts. The accounts are run at the highest administrative levels (National Police Service, Kenyan Police Service, Directorate of Criminal Investigations) or on behalf of the highest police authorities (such as the current IG Joseph Boinnet, Rtd IG Kimaiyo). This highly centralized approach to social media use means that the police tweets, particularly those related to security incidents, are largely focused on the capital city. This likely reduces the effectiveness of the NPS Communication Strategy. Research on police use of twitter in other geographic contexts have found that localized content receives the most user interaction (Crump 2011, pp.23-24). Users followed and engaged with situations that were close to home or had potential to affect their lives. However, the NPS’s decision to prohibit official social media from police at the local level limits this opportunity to build community interest and engagement.

Additionally, while many of the NPS messages on Twitter are meant to be building a positive appearance of the force, the highly centralized approach likely creates a bifurcated image. In focus group discussions many commented on how quickly the NPS twitter account replies to user messages. Others commented about the responsiveness of Inspector General Boinnet on Twitter. It is likely that many of these respondents were familiar with Inspector General Boinnet precisely because he has a highly active social media account. For the NPS and Boinnet, this positive feedback from focus groups would likely be considered success for the program. However, these positive images are focused on a very small number of key individuals and central accounts. They contrast with the daily interactions and images that many continue to have of the police force as a whole.

The ways in which senior leadership quickly reversed plans to decentralize the online communication efforts demonstrates competing interests around the social media strategy. While the social media team appeared committed to the strategy, senior leadership demonstrated a fear in losing control of the NPS voice to social media accounts. The strategy aims to build public trust in the police yet, the highly centralized approach shows that senior leadership also lacks trust in the police and want to limit the use of social media in an official capacity to a select few. These institutional dynamics, which favours a narrow section of the police, ultimately undermines policy goals to use new technology to encourage broader police engagement with the public.

Signs of new forms of engagement?

Most of the goals of the NPS's strategy have proven more difficult to achieve than initially expected. Yet, the NPS social media team remain enthusiastic about the potential of ICTs for policing. Indeed, there are signs that many in the public are receptive to engagement with the police online, despite complaints about unfulfilled expectations of the types of messages the NPS communicate. For example, the NPS's Twitter account has rapidly gained attention on social media, increasing in followers from 13,600 thousand in May 2016 to 152,000 in November 2018. Following the account is a conscious choice to allow the NPS messages into a users news feed. One should not assume this equates to support for the police but it does suggest an interest or curiosity in the messages put out by the NPS.

NPS interviewees consider their account successful for reasons that extend beyond simply the number of followers. They explained that much of the value of social media to the police force is not visible to the public. They were referring to tips that are sent to the NPS account through direct messages. Direct messaging is a feature that allows a Twitter user to send a private message, which is only visible to the receiver. As such, I was unable to view or verify these tips. However, various interviewees expressed excitement about these private messages. An Assistant Inspector General (AIG) in the communication directorate explained that in the first six months of active use of social media, they received ‘much more information with the public, not only about crime but also about terrorism.’³³ This was mirrored by another mid-grade officer who noted ‘the public has the information and the easiest way to learn this information is through Twitter and Facebook...it is a part of the policing policy that revolves around the public.’³⁴ The Inspector in charge of the social media team, who monitors the social media accounts daily, also confirmed a large increase in citizen tips since the NPS began using the forums. He notes

anyone can direct message us, in this way we get first-hand intelligence, it gives us tangible information. People report things like cattle rustling and illegal trading. They tell us these things in confidence. Also things like gender based violence. And when we follow up, the information is usually very accurate.³⁵

The interviewees did provide some vague examples of ways social media tips assisted in solving crimes. Still, further research would be needed to draw conclusions about the role of anonymous social media leads in crime investigations in Kenya. For the police interviewees, these private messages had symbolic importance. They viewed the increase in tips from the public as the strongest sign that their social media strategy was helping to build trust in the police. One officer explained that the number of tips on Twitter showed ‘the public is growing more confident with us.’³⁶ Another officer stated ‘we see people put their security concerns on social media and even tweet directly to the IG, we see this as a good sign.’³⁷ When the police interviewees were asked why they felt social media was a more popular way to report information, compared to other means such as calling or reporting in person to a station, their responses hint at the negative perception of the police. One officer explained that ‘many people are uncomfortable to call or go to the police’ and another made a vague reference to problems with bribery.³⁸

Many focus group participants, especially young people, confirmed that they would be more likely to engage with the police online than in person. Their discussions largely revolved around concerns over perceived police abuse of power. For example, the following comments were made in Mombasa focus groups:

If you're seen in a police station, people will have ill words with you. You can be anonymous (on social media).

If in Kenya you go to the police station with information, you are the first suspect. Social media means you can go to the police without going to them, but give them information on social media.

Kenya has corruption, if I report something they just ask for a bribe, but if I can access the top guys online I can tell them.

These are hypothetical statements and it does not guarantee that the respondents would turn to the NPS social media accounts if faced with a crime. Still these statements reveal support for the police mandate and a willingness to assist in improving security while still demonstrating a reluctance to engage face to face with police. These responses from focus group participants and the many messages to the NPS, which can be viewed publicly, suggest that many in Kenya are receptive to the idea of engagement with the police online. As the NPS continue and possibly expand their social media strategy, future research could engage with individuals who have attempted to seek assistance from the police using social media to further assess the effects of the strategy.

Yet, as the NPS social media team have made clear, engagement online cannot replace in-person interactions for activities such as crime reporting. Therefore, while the communication team of the NPS are encouraged by the public response to their social media messages, they acknowledge that it is only one step in a long-term goal of 'building a strong link with the community' and improving public trust in the force.

Conclusion

The Kenyan police's entry into social media in an official capacity is the result of a myriad of factors including ongoing police reforms, government focus on new technologies and international engagements encouraging ICTs in policing. The NPS's communication strategy attempts to capitalize on the popularity of social media in Kenya as a new channel for police engagement with the public. Most of the NPS's

messages on social media follow traditional image work strategies seen in many other parts of the world and across time. Yet, focus group respondents often expressed cynicism about NPS social media messages, likely linked to widespread misgiving about the police in Kenya. The NPS struggles with revising their public image following the history of the police in the colonial era and subsequent actions in post-colonial times, a challenge many other African police forces will also likely face if/when they move to digital engagement.

Over fifteen years of attempts to reform the police with limited results highlights the structural constraints of reform in Kenya. Like other post-colonial states, the development of the security system in Kenya has not followed a linear progression but has been subject to ‘the formative effects of historical inheritance, political pressure, contingencies and personal ambitions’ (Hills 2000, p.60) The social media strategy is also affected by the complex dynamics that underlie reform efforts. Even in the early phases of the policy’s implementation it has hit hurdles, which raise questions about senior police leadership’s level of commitment to the strategy.

In addition to attempting to improve their image and promote an understanding of the NPS, the strategy aims to create a platform for the public to report security concerns and to provide real-time updates on unfolding events. Yet, these goals have proven more difficult to accomplish than initially anticipated. In Kenya, as in other parts of the world, police have found it especially difficult to effectively use social media amid public disorder such as widespread protests. The goals of reimagining crime reporting have also been unfulfilled. Rather than create a new place for reporting crime, the social media account urges users to conform to existing requirements to report crime in person at a station. Similarly, instead of providing real-time information, the account circulates existing press releases. Therefore, despite much optimism about the ‘new’ potential of social media, most the NPS social media engagement mimics traditional forms of broadcasting information and encourages conformity to existing forms of public-police engagement.

Part of the broader goal of the social media strategy was to decentralize police communication. It was envisaged that the bottom-up nature of social media would allow individual police officers to engage directly with their communities using technologies that have become a part of many Kenyans’ daily lives. This image is very much aligned with notions of community policing. Yet, the central police hierarchy deemed that the wider police force was not yet ready for this responsibility

following leaks of sensitive information by officers online. The NPS backtracked on the goal and issued standing orders to prohibit individual officers from using social media in an official capacity. Thus, the plan to decentralize the engagement has instead led to a highly centralized online presence. Only a select number of individuals are authorized release messages on social media and the accounts are mostly focused on Nairobi. This has limited the level of community engagement, especially for those outside the capital. It has given greater visibility to top officers but done little to build relations or trust between the public and the average officer.

Despite not fulfilling most of their goals, there are hints that the public in Kenya are receptive to the police accounts on social media. The NPS report receiving an increase in tips through their social media accounts and numerous focus group participants explained that they would be more willing to engage with police online than in person. The NPS social media team is but one small section of a much larger police force in Kenya. Many of the interviewees from the NPS social media team were aware that their efforts to improve the image of the force online were often not matched by policing actions on the ground. Still, the social media ‘pioneers’ of the NPS were not deterred. The leader of the NPS social media team noted that their strategy is ‘not just focused on today,’ instead they expect to see improved relations with the public in the long-term.

References

Anderson, D. 2005. *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicholson.

Anderson, D. 2002. Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya. *African Affairs* 101(405): 531-555.

Beek, J. and M. Gopfert. 2015. Travelling Police: The potential for change in the wake of police reforms in West Africa. *Social Anthropology* 23(4): 465-479.

Bierschenk, T. 2017. Who are the Police in Africa? In J. Beek, M. Göpfert, O. Owen and J. Steinberg, eds. *Police in Africa: The Street Level View*, London: Hurst & Co., pp 103-120.

Brogden, M. 2004. Community Policing: A Panacea from the West. *African Affairs* 103(413): 635-649.

- Bullock, K. 2018. (Re)presenting “order” online: The construction of police presentational strategies on social media. *Policing & Society* 28(3): 345-359.
- Cross, C. 2014. Community Policing and the Politics of Local Development in Tanzania. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 52(4): 517-540.
- Crump, J. 2011. What Are the Police Doing on Twitter? Social Media, the Police and the Public. *Police & Internet* 3(4): 1-27.
- Ericson, R. 1982. *Reproducing Order: A Study of Police Patrol Work*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ericson, R. and K. Haggerty. 1997. *Policing the Risk Society*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, D. R. 2001. Democratic consolidation and community policing: Conflicting imperatives in South Africa. *Policing & Society* 11(2): 121-150.
- Haunss, S. 2015. Promise and Practice in Studies of Social Media and Movements. In O. Leistert and L. Dencik, eds *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest* London: Rowman & Littlefield International, pp. 13-31.
- Hersman, E. 2012. Mobilizing Tech Entrepreneurs in Africa *innovations* 7(4): 59-67.
- Hills, A. 2000. Defence diplomacy and security sector reform. *Contemporary Security Policy* 21(1): 46-67.
- Hills, A. 2008. The dialectic of police reform in Nigeria. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46(2): 215-234.
- Hope, K. R. 2015. In pursuit of democratic policing: An analytic review and assessment of police reforms in Kenya. *Police Science & Management* 17(2): 91-97.
- Kazeem, Y. (6 April 2016) ‘Politics and activism are driving Africa’s Twitter conversations to new highs,’ <http://qz.com/654958/politics-and-activism-are-driving-africas-twitter-conversations-to-new-highs/> (Accessed 19 Sep 2016)
- The Kenyan Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence*, 2008.
- Khamadi, S. (30 July 2015) ‘Patrick Safari AKA “Modern Corps” arrested and charged for “annoying tweet”’ *Kenya Monitor* <http://www.monitor.co.ke/2015/07/30/patrick-safari-aka-modern-corps-arrested-and-charged-for-annoying-tweet/> (Accessed 21 September 2016)
- Killingray, D. 1986. The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa. *African Affairs* 85(340): 411-437
- Lee, M. and A. McGovern. 2014. *Policing and Media: Public Relations, Simulations, and Communications*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Mair, D. 2017. #Westgate: A Case Study: How al-Shabaab used Twitter during an Ongoing Attack. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40(1): 24-43.
- Manning, P. 1978. The Police: mandate, strategies and appearances. In P. Manning and J. van Maanen, eds. *Policing: A view from the street*. Santa Monica, CA; Goodyear Publishing Co., pp. 7-13.
- Mawby, R. 2002. *Policing Images: Policing, Communication and Legitimacy*. Abdington, UK: Wilan Publishing.
- Meijer, A. and Torenvlied R. 2016. Social media and the new organization of government communications: an empirical analysis of Twitter usage by the Dutch police. *American review of public administration* 46(2): 143-161.
- The National Police Service Communication Strategy*, 2014.
- Ndemo, E. B. 2015. Political Entrepreneurialism: Reflections of a Civil Servant on the Role of Political Institutions in Technology Innovation and Diffusion in Kenya. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 4(1): 1-14.
- O'Connor, C.D. 2017. The Police on Twitter: image management, community building, and implications for policing in Canada. *Policing & Society* 27(8): 899-912.
- Open Society Foundation*, 'Mapping Digital Media: Kenya,' 5 February 2013.
- Osse, A. 2016. Police reform in Kenya: a process of 'meddling through. *Policing & Society* 26(8): 907-924.
- Otieno, D. (22 Aug 2016) 'The Pitfalls in Kenya's high internet penetration' *The Daily Nation* <http://www.nation.co.ke/newsplex/kenya-fixed-broadband-internet/2718262-3352180-q5r79vz/> (Accessed 19 Sep 2016).
- Procter, R., J. Crump, S. Karstedt, A. Voss and M. Cantijoch. 2013. Reading the Riots: what were the police doing on Twitter? *Policing & Society* 23(4): 413-436.
- Ruteere, M. 2011. More than political tools: The police and post-election violence in Kenya. *African Security Review* 20(4): 11-20.
- Ruteere, M. and M. E. Pommerolle. 2003. Democratizing Security or Decentralizing Repression? The Ambiguities of Community Policing in Kenya. *African Affairs* 102(409): 587-604.
- Schneider, C. J. 2015. 'Police 'Image Work' in an Era of Social Media: YouTube and the 2007 Montebello Summit Protest.' In D. Trottier and C. Fuchs, eds. *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*, New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 227-246.
- Schneider, C. J. 2016. Police presentational strategies on Twitter in Canada. *Policing & Society* 26(2): 128-147.

Trottier, D. 2012. *Social Media as Surveillance*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Wambua, P. November 2015a. Call the police? Across Africa, citizens point to police and government performance issues on crime. *Afrobarometer Dispatch* No. 57.

Wambua, P. November 2015b. Police corruption in Africa undermines trust, but support for law enforcement remains strong. *Afrobarometer Dispatch* No. 56.

We are Social. 24 January 2017. Digital in 2017, Global Overview.

<https://wearesocial.com/uk/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview> (accessed 30 May 2018)

Willis, J. 2015. "Peace and order are in the interests of every citizen": elections, violence and state legitimacy in Kenya, 1957-74. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 48(1): 99-116.

¹ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016

² *The National Police Service Communications Strategy*, 2014; 12.

³ Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys across more than 35 countries in Africa. They receive funding from a variety of international organisations, which are listed on their webpage. Surveys in Kenya have been carried out in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2016. Afrobarometer data is publicly available at afrobarometer.org. Detailed analysis on survey questions related to police can be found in Wambua (2015a) and Wambua (2015b) in reference list.

⁴ As of January 2019 only 6 African countries had active, verified national police accounts on Twitter. The Kenyan police Twitter account had the 3rd highest number of followers, behind South Africa and Nigeria.

⁵ Social media use in Africa grew by 50% in 2016. <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview> (accessed 26 September 2017).

⁶ The Inspector General oversees the National Police Service which includes: the Kenya Police Service, Directorate of Criminal Investigations, and Administrative Police Service. For more on the NPS structure see the National Police Service official webpage: <http://www.nationalpolice.go.ke/pages/search.html>

⁷ All participants were provided refreshments, snacks, and reimbursement for transport to the location.

⁸ Based on Statista figures as of first quarter of 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>.

⁹ *The National Police Service Communications Strategy*, 2014; 33.

¹⁰ For example, the 2010 constitution clarified the functions, objectives, and powers of the National Police Service. Additional reforms were established with subsequent laws such as the National Police Service Act, National Police Service Commission Act, and Independent Policing Oversight Authority Act, all in 2011.

¹¹ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016

¹² 'UNODC launches police reform project in Kenya' 22 October 2013 <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2013/October/unodc-launches-police-reform-project-in-kenya.html> (Accessed 19 Sep 2016)

¹³ *Open Society Foundation*, 'Mapping Digital Media: Kenya,' 5 February 2013.

¹⁴ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016

¹⁵ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016

¹⁶ *The National Police Service Communications Strategy*, 2014; 30.

¹⁷ In the NPS Communication Strategy visibility and promoting an understanding of the NPS are listed as two difference objectives. I have merged them together due to their similarity.

¹⁸ Focus groups in Nairobi and Mombasa, February and March 2016

¹⁹ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016

-
- ²⁰ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ²¹ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ²² *The National Police Service Communications Strategy*, 2014; 33.
- ²³ *The National Police Service Communications Strategy*, 2014; 34.
- ²⁴ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ²⁵ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016
- ²⁶ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ²⁷ Both the Kenya Prison Services (KPS) and the NPS fall under the Ministry of Interior, but the KPS is a separate entity from the NPS.
- ²⁸ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016
- ²⁹ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016
- ³⁰ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³¹ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³² Author interviews, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³³ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³⁴ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³⁵ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016
- ³⁶ Author interview, Nairobi, February 2016
- ³⁷ Author interview, Nairobi, March 2016
- ³⁸ Author interviews, Nairobi, March-February 2016